THE SCHISM

Of The Roman Catholic Church

From The Eastern Orthodox

1054 - 1954

By

ARCHBISHOP MICHAEL

GREEK ARCHDIOCESE OF N. & S. AMERICA
National Youth Office — Office of Public Relations

THE SCHISM

Of The Roman Catholic Church From The Eastern Orthodox

Exactly nine hundred years have passed since the separation of the two great Churches of Christendom when the Western Church broke away from the Eastern Orthodox. Many still seek the cause of this most unfortunate division. Actually, it can be found in the difference concerning the Primacy of the Pope of Rome.

Until the Fifth Century A.D. there was not even a single instance of dissention or antagonism between the two Churches. The Bishop of Rome had always been considered the First in the order of hierarchy. This was a natural consequence of the position of Rome as the capital of the Roman Empire. When Constantinople became the new capital of the Byzantine State its Bishop assumed the second position in the ranks of the hierarchy. The third canon of the Second Ecumenical Council (381) designates the position of honor of the Bishop of Constantinople as second only to that of the Bishop of Rome. This decision of the Council is based on the premise that Constantinople is new Rome, and, incidentally, it has been retained among the titles of the Patriarch of Constantinople.

This indicates, as was brought out at the Council, that the political importance of the city defined the honorary status of its hierarchy. The same fact was repeated with emphasis by the

now renown 28th Canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council held at Chalcedon in 451. At that time, the Bishop of Constantinople was acclaimed as equal in honor to the Bishop of Rome.

In the meantime, erroneous beliefs began to circulate in the Church of the West. Of these, the most serious was an addition to the Creed of Nicaea-Constantinople concerning the Holy Spirit. The Church of Rome wanted to say that the Holy Spirit proceeds and from the Son. In Latin, this addition was accomplished by the word, *"filioque."*

It should be made clear at this point that the Creed or ΠΙΣΤΕΥΩ, was compiled and authorized as the Christian Confessions of faith by the First and Second Ecumenical Councils. The first seven articles of the Creed were approved at the First Council and the remaining five were composed at the Second Council which was held in Constantinople. The Eighth article states "and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, Giver of Life, who proceedeth from the Father, who together with the Father and the Son is worshipped . . ." The addition of *"filioque"* ("and from the Son") was first heard in Spain during the middle of the Sixth Century. From there, this innovation spread to other western countries. It is most noteworthy however, that during the early part of the Ninth Century, Pope Leo III protested against this addition to the Creed. Convinced that it should remain as it has been written and proclaimed by the first two Ecumenical Councils, he ordered that the Creed be inscribed without any change upon two silver plaques. These were placed in St. Peter's at Rome for all to see. This is a historical fact which is accepted by all historians as true.

The first to object strongly to this addition to the Creed, and to other errors of the Western Church, was Photios, the great Patriarch of Constantinople, who flourished in the middle of the Ninth Century. Photios was a brilliant scholar and theo-

logian who held a high position in the Imperial Byzantine Court. He attained great literary fame with his monumental work, "Myrio biblos," in which he summarized 280 ancient writings of which the majority were subsequently lost. Due to his great ability and exceptional virtues as a layman he was admitted to the priesthood and in a period of six days he was ordained deacon, priest and bishop. On Christmas Day of 857, he was enthroned as Patriarch of Constantinople.

The discord between the Eastern and the Western Church continued on a livelier vein even after Patriarch Photios. The Eastern Church, with the Patriarch of Constantinople at its head, protested against the errors in dogma taught by the Western Church. Constant appeals were made to Rome to renounce all error and conform with the teachings of the Seven Ecumenical Councils of the first eight centuries. Simultaneously, the Western Church, with the Pope as its head maintained that the entire Christian Church was obliged to adhere without discussion to the pronouncements of the Roman See. They maintained that the primate of the Church of Rome was the vicar of Christ on earth, because he was supposedly the heir to the primacy of St. Peter whom Christ our Lord had installed as head of the universal Church, and who had founded the Christian Church of Rome.

Now let us see what we can learn from the original account of the events in question:

(a) We should first consider that passage from the Gospel according to St. Matthew upon which the Roman Catholics base the primacy of St. Peter. Our Lord was at Caesarea of Philippi (Matt. 16) when He asked His Disciples: "Whom do men say that I am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist; some, Elias; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, but whom say ye that I am?

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art Christ the Son of the Living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jonah: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter; and upon this rock I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." (Matt. 16:13-18)

It is quite evident from these words of our Lord that He built His Church not upon Peter for then He would have clearly said, "Trou art *Peter* and upon *thee* I will build my Church," but upon the *rock* of the true Faith which Peter confessed. Christ our Lord clearly said that His Church is build upon the truth which Peter declared that our Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God. Only through considerable distortion of the text can one draw the conclusion of the Roman Catholics, that Christ built the Church upon Peter.

(b) It is also clear from the Scriptures that St. Peter had no authority over the Apostles. In his Epistle to the Galatians, St. Paul states that when he saw Peter was not thinking correctly, he corrected him in the presence of others, "But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed." (Gal. 2:11) Further down St. Paul elaborates by saying, ". . . when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before them all, if thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?" (Gal. 2:14) On the basis of these words of St. Paul we may justly question, "Is there even a trace of recognition here of Peter's authority to teach without the possibility of error?"

(c) Concerning the foundation of the Christian Church in Rome there is authoritative testimony that it was not accom-

plished by St. Peter. It was established by Christians who settled in Rome. Moreover, St. Paul considered it his Church. He mentioned this in his epistle to the Romans, ". . . from Jerusalem and round about unto Illyricum, I have fully preached the gospel of Christ. Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man's foundation . . . for which cause also I have been much hindered from coming to you. But now having no more place in these parts, and having a great desire these many years to come unto you. Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey." (Rom. 15:19-20, 22-23)

From this passage, therefore, we clearly see that St. Paul had no knowledge that Peter was in Rome or that St. Peter had founded the Church there. On the contrary, he says that he feels obliged to preach the gospel where no other Apostle taught so that he would not build upon the foundation laid by another. Surely this is an explicit testimony that St. Peter was in no way connected with the foundation of the Church of Rome. Actually St. Peter served the Church for many years in Antioch, as verified by St. Jerome, and then went to Rome where he suffered martyrdom with St. Paul.

(d) In conclusion it should be pointed out that the order of precedence given to the Apostolic Sees was determined exclusively by the political importance of various cities. The Bishop of Rome was recognized as first because Rome was capital of the empire. Originally, the Bishop of Constantinople was designated as second by the Second Ecumenical Council. Subsequently, when Constantinople became the capital of the Byzantine Empire and was referred to as New Rome, the Fourth Ecumenical Council proclaimed the Bishop of Constantinople equal in rank with the Bishop of Rome.

The Bishop of Alexandria was designated third, because his city was then the great center of learning; and following him

were the Bishops of Antioch and Jerusalem. If the position of honor were determined not by the political but by the religious significance of the city, does it not stand to reason that the primacy of honor would be reserved for Jerusalem, the Mother Church of Christendom? There would be no dispute in that case, for our Lord lived there and was crucified and arose from the tomb. Moreover, the first Christian Church was founded in Jerusalem on the day of Pentecost.

These are the true and accurate facts as they are brought to light by the authentic documents which make up Ecclesiastical History. It is very unfortunate that the Western Church insists on its viewpoint for so many centuries.

We Orthodox are deeply grieved that our Roman Catholic brethren distort the facts. We are praying daily and will continue to pray that the Roman Catholic Church will again embrace the truth, as many learned laymen of that faith have done already. That event will be one of the most momentous in the entire history of mankind. It will mark the beginning of the fulfillment of the prayer of our Lord on the night of His betrayal, "Father, I pray that they all may be one; as thou Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me."

Distributed by the

GREEK ARCHDIOCESE

10 East 79th Street, New York 21, N. Y.

No. 8

10¢ per copy